

Who are the Master Gardener Volunteers?

Want to be a Master Gardener?

People all over the county with horticultural skills, a willingness to learn and a desire to help others become Master Gardeners. When the program was started their role was primarily answering phone requests for gardening information and staffing plant clinics. In recent years, Master Gardener work has diversified. Thanks to the perceptiveness of Extension agents working in the program, your non-horticultural skills have been recognized and combined with your gardening interests and knowledge to produce a variety of interesting volunteer work which plays a valuable role.

The Master Gardener Program conducted the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service is open to all people regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, religion, or national origin.

Responsibilities

Following a comprehensive training in horticulture, Master Gardeners have one year from the end of training to complete the agreed upon volunteer time. Usually the volunteer work is done within the geographical area served by the unit office conducting the training. Special arrangement can be made for some tasks outside one of the units.

Master Gardener volunteers are responsible to an Extension agent to complete and report planned activities. If daytime employment interferes with volunteer work, arrangements can be made for work to be done at Extension night or weekend functions. Sometimes the nature of the volunteer's work is such that it can be done outside the office, E.G., research, writing, artwork. Many activities are interagency projects and involve working with parks and recreation departments, nursing homes, city departments, etc.

To retain the Arkansas Master Gardener title, individuals are required to participate in recertification training and provide additional volunteer service hours through the local Extension Office. The title, Master Gardener, is to be used only by individuals trained in the Arkansas Master Gardener program to assist the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service and the title is valid only when the volunteer is participating in the Arkansas Master Gardener program. When individuals cease active participation, their designation as Master Gardener is void.

Jobs

As a Master Gardener you agree to do work in your local Extension office that is related to horticulture. Much variety exists because Master Gardeners bring a wealth of expertise to the program. The following are just a few of the example of jobs done by current Arkansas Master Gardeners:

- Created and maintained demonstration gardens
- Conducted school gardening programs
- Gave talks to groups interested in horticulture
- Produced a monthly home horticultural newsletter

- Helped set up and maintain Web site
- Contributed in the preparation of the Master Gardener Handbook
- Maintained office reference library
- Answered questions and took soil samples in residential area
- Participated in on-site lawn clinics
- Answered telephone questions at County office
- Photographed Master Gardener Projects

Paycheck

As you know, volunteers are not paid with money, but we hope that the gratitude of your fellow paid workers in the Extension office and the district and state staff will help you feel that your work is appreciated. Certainly, the number of citizens who come to you with plant problems will be indicated that you and your knowledge are needed. As you do your job you will probably begin to notice some of the pay that volunteers traditionally enjoy. You are, after all, a Master Gardener, and your horticultural and communication skills qualify you to do some interesting work. Your sense of accomplishment and pride in a job well done are assents that only you can collect.

Want to Be a Master Gardener?

If you interested in becoming a Master Gardener, please contact your local County Extension Agent.